

Message Text

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SUBJ: THE SOFT COMPROMISE - ONE YEAR OF SICILIAN REGIONAL

"CONFRONTO"

1. SUMMARY: AFTER ONE FULL YEAR OF LIFE, THE DC-PCI "CONFRONTO" IN SICILY'S REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IS ALIVE AND HEALTHY WITH NO APPARENT THREATS TO ITS LONGEVITY. WHILE "CONFRONTO" HAS PERMITTED PASSAGE OF SUBSTANTIAL REGIONAL SPENDING BILLS, IT HAS NOT BROUGHT AN END TO OLD-STYLE WAYS OF DOING POLITICAL BUSINESS. WITH THE PCI PLAYING THE RESPONSIBLE MODERATE, THE OTHER LAY PARTIES FRET ABOUT THE DC-PCI LINK. SO FAR, THEY HAVE DONE LITTLE ABOUT IT. ALL PARTIES HERE FEAR SICILY'S BEING LEFT BEHIND BY EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN THE NORTH. END SUMMARY.
2. THE SYMBIOTIC "CONFRONTO" BETWEEN THE CENTER-LEFT COALITION

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AND THE PCI, EXTENDED TO THE LIBERALS PLI), HAS GIVEN REGIONAL PRESIDENT BONFIGLIO'S GOVERNMENT OVERWHELMING STRENGTH IN THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY 71 OF 90 SEATS). IN ITS FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION, HOWEVER, THE "CONFRONTO" HAS PRODUCED FEW SIGNS OF A QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT IN SICILIAN POLICY-MAKING. INDEED, BUSINESS GOES ON AS USUAL THOUGH AT SLIGHTLY HIGHER LEVELS OF PUBLIC SPENDING, AND WITH LESS OF THE OPEN GUERILLA WARFARE USUALLY WITHIN THE DC) WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE LIFE OF PRE-"CONFRONTO" REGIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSIONS.

3. SUBSTANTIAL SECTORS OF THE REGIONAL ESTABLISHMENT, INCLUDING LOCAL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND SOCIALISTS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED, CONFIDENTIAL
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SUGGEST THAT THE SICILIAN DC LEADERSHIP HAS ALREADY OPTED, IF ONLY

BY DEFAULT, FOR CONTINUING ACCEPTANCE OF THE CURRENT MUFFLED FORM OF LOCAL MINI-COMPROMISE WITH THE PCI. A FORMER DC PRESIDENT OF THE REGION, FOR EXAMPLE, TOLD US THAT CENTER-LEFT POLITICIANS ARE STILL TOO BUSY ARM-WRESTLING WITH EACH OTHER TO WORRY ABOUT SERIOUS POLICY MAKING OR THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNIST CONNECTION. EVEN THE SOCIALIST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REGION HAS TOLD US THAT "CONFRONTO" IS A ONE-WAY STREET FAVORING THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES AND THAT THE FULL HISTORIC COMPROMISE CAN BE AVOIDED ONLY IF THE LAY PARTIES

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SUCCEED IN REACHING SOME FORM OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND IN KEEPING THEIR DISTANCE BOTH FROM THE DC AND THE PCI. THE ONLY DIM SIGNS TO DATE OF SUCH A COALESCENCE IS THE JOINT REGIONAL ASSEMBLY DELEGATION SET UP BY THE LIBERALS AND REPUBLICANS.

4. REGIONAL POLITICIANS ARE UNITED, HOWEVER, IN THEIR FEAR THAT GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL RECOVERY MEASURES WILL CONCENTRATE ON THE NORTH AND LEAVE THE MEZZOGIORNO FURTHER BEHIND.

EXAMPLES:

-- REGIONAL ASSESSOR PIERSANTI MATTARELLA DC) IN CRITICIZING THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT'S RECOVERY PROPOSAL, HAS CHARGED IN SEVERAL RECENT STATEMENTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ONCE AGAIN PENALIZE THE SOUTH TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF BIG INDUSTRY IN THE NORTH.
-- IN A PALERMO SEMINAR, LOCAL PSI LEADERS STRUCK THE SAME NOTE BUT, IN AN INVERSION OF ROLES, BLAMED THE PCI RATHER THAN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. SPECIFIC PSI CHARGE WAS THAT THE PCI IS PURSUING OUTWORN, CONSERVATIVE POLICIES - DEAR TO NORTHERN INDUSTRY AND THE MASS OF ITS TRADE UNION SUPPORT - TO ACHIEVE NARROW POLITICAL GOALS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SOUTH AND THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF.
-- TO PROVE THE PSI'S POINT, THE SICILIAN PCI LEADERSHIP RECENTLY

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ISSUED A PUBLIC DOCUMENT URGING WORKERS' ACCEPTANCE OF HARDSHIP AND SACRIFICES SINCE NO OTHER OPTIONS ARE LEFT.

5. ATTENUATING TO SOME DEGREE THE LOCAL IMPACT OF ITALY'S CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS IS DISBURSEMENT OF THE 1,081 BILLION LIRE VOTED BY
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THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY TO AID AGRICULTURE, TOURISM AND INDUSTRY. WHILE BUREAUCRATIC AND POLITICAL OBSTACLES CONTINUE TO HINDER PROMPT SPENDING IN SOME AREAS, FUNDS DESTINED TO AGRICULTURE ABOUT HALF THE TOTAL AMOUNT) ARE BEING SPENT AT A RAPID RATE. MANY SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT CLIENTELISM NOT PRODUCTIVITY IS THE CONTROLLING CRITERION IN DETERMINING WHO RECEIVES THESE FUNDS. IMPLEMENTATION IS ALSO MOVING FORWARD BRISKLY IN TOURIST INDUSTRY WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND RATIONALIZATION OF EXISTING FACILITIES.

6. ITH ABOVE PROJECTS UNDERWAY, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY FOCUS IN UPCOMING PERIOD WILL CONCENTRATE ON INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING AND RECOVERY. THORNY PROBLEMS HERE - BEYOND ITALY'S OVERALL ECONOMIC TROUBLES - ARE FINDING ADDITIONAL CAPITAL, REDUCING BURDEN OF UNPROFITABLE ENTERPRISES CONTROLLED BY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND FILLING SEVERAL KEY JOBS IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR E.G. PRESIDENTS OF BANKS OF SICILY, SICILIAN MINERALS AGENCY, ETC.) FIERCE AND

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HIGHLY - PARTISAN COMPETITION FOR THESE BILLETS COULD ERODE THE HARMONY WHICH NOW CHARACTERIZES THE BONFIGLIO ADMINISTRATION BOTH IN ITS INTERNAL RELATIONS AND IN ITS EXTERNAL RAPPORT WITH THE COMMUNISTS AND LIBERALS WHO HAVE ENDORSED ITS PROGRAM.
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